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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on research designed to explore the status of children and the relationship of patterns of child care to social structure and social change. The study is based on interviews with scholars and government officials, an analysis of statistical data and research reports, and visits to day care centers, playgrounds, and other settings in the United States, Sweden, Israel, and China. While much of the information necessary to assess the system of child care in this country has not been systematically collected and analyzed, there are a number of empirical indicators of child neglect and abuse. The current "crisis" seems to be the result of a combination of social trends of which the following appear to be major ones: (1) changes in the structure of households, (2) changes in sex roles which downgrade parenthood and child rearing, (3) loss of child care options outside the family, (4) a serious imbalance in the supply and demand for child care, and (5) the costliness of children. The role of the child and role system involved in child care which operates in different societies is also discussed. (Author/CS)

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The Status of the Child and Alternative Structures for Child Care Systems

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How a society treats its children depends upon its views of what children are like as well as what is perceived as necessary for the smooth functioning of the society itself. As one historical observer has put it: "Children can be thought of as vessels to be filled, animals to be restrained, plants to be encouraged, or simply as adults in the process of becoming" (Larrabee, 1960:199). Aries' classic study, Centuries of Childhood, makes clear that our current views have not always been the prevailing ones, even in Western culture. Indeed the very notion of childhood as a meaningfully distinct phase in the life cycle is a relatively recent conceptualization.

Problems pertaining to children and child care are emerging as important policy issues in the United States, in particular the consequences to children of the great increases in women's activities outside of the home.

In the past few years, a number of works have been published analyzing the trend from informal, home-centered child care involving little or no monetary payments toward monetized group care outside the home (e.g., Roby, 1973). A number of specific policy oriented studies of day care facilities, needs, and costs have been carried out (Women's Bureau, 1973; Ruderman, 1968; Low and Spindler, 1968). The vast literature on child development includes a number of studies of the effects of day care and other caring arrangements on children's physiological, cognitive, and

emotional development. The most comprehensive examinations (White et al, 1972; and Sjølund, 1973) show no consistent results among the hundreds of studies reviewed, with tremendous variation depending upon the type of effect and the type of children studied.

The input of sociologists to the debate on child care has been much smaller. The status of children and the relationships of patterns of child care to social structure and social change have received little attention. This paper will report on research designed to explore these topics in this society and others. The works, which have been supported by the Office of Child Development and the Russell Sage Foundation, is based upon interviews with scholars and government officials, collection of statistical data and research reports, and visits to day care centers, schools, playgrounds, and other settings where children are found in large numbers, in the United States, Sweden and Israel, plus analysis of available data and visitors' accounts of education and child rearing in China.

The Status of the Child

A review of various periods of American history reveals important changes in the view of the child. In the early days of our country, all able-bodied persons constituted a much-needed source of labor, and each additional child born into a family represented an additional hand with the harvest or insurance of future support for a parent. If parents did not have an immediate need for the child's labor, there was usually a relative or acquaintance who did. In a society in which idleness was a sin, the

ideal model of child rearing included a period of apprenticeship or indentured labor, a system involving at least a quasi-legal contract between a child's parents and the head of the household in which he was placed. The child would be taught the craft or trade of his "employer" and would receive room and board, in return for assistance in the workshop and home (often including help in caring for the younger children of the household). Apprenticeship contracts often stipulated behavioral requirements -- e.g., it would be agreed that the apprentice would not dance, play cards, gamble or engage in any other kinds of activities which would reflect unfaborably upon his employer (Handlin and Handlin, 1971; Hawes, 1971).

The growth of industrialized cities in the post Civil War period brought the first recognition of the special needs of children. Accounts of the period include descriptions of swarms of unattended, often homeless children roaming the streets of New York and other cities. Some were fully employed -- The Newsboy, Ragged Dick, and other best-selling novels of the period romanticized the adventures and ultimate wordly success of newspaper and shoeshine boys, and there were boarding houses in large cities for some of these "independent little dealers," financed completely by their earnings -- but many more children survived by begging and stealing (Hawes, 1971: 91 ff). It was, indeed, the visibility of homeless, mistreated and delinquent children, along with the new framework and set of analytical tools for defining social problems provided by the rise of social science in the United States which led to child labor laws, compulsory school attendance, and the creation of agencies and institutions devoted to the protection of children (e.g., the Children's Aid Society; the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and juvenile courts). Children's needs, however, were still subordinated to those of adults and of society as a whole.

During the twentiety century, the elaboration of childhood as a special period has continued unabated. Perhaps the time of greatest child-centerdness in this country was during the two decades following the end of World War II. Among the special characteristics of this period were the proliferation of experts and expertise on child development and child rearing (as epitomized by the ubiquitous Dr. Spock, whose basic handbook, Baby and Child Care, is a best seller second only to the Bible). The literature of this period has certain common themes. (1) Children need the devoted and full time attention of their biological mothers. Otherwise they will suffer from "deprivation" and their later emotional growth will be stunted. As Bowlby, the most influential proponent of the theory has put it, "when deprived of maternal care, the child's development is almost always retarded -- physically, intellectually and socially" (Bowlby, 1952:15). (2) The first five years of life are also the time of greatest cognitive growth, a finding emerging out of the influential work of Piaget and leading to everything from the current emphasis upon pressure for preschool education to the growing market for educational toys, books, and kits telling parents how to teach their babies to read.
(3) Children are fun. An analysis of publications of the Children's Bureau over several decades has shown the emergence of a "fun morality"

in connection with child rearing, which argues that not only are parents supposed to provide for their children's physical and emotional needs, but they are also supposed to enjoy the process (Wolfenstein, 1951).

A second characteristic of the period of child-centeredness was the separation of children and childhood from the workaday life of the larger society. The American child is not expected to make any real contribution to the working of the community, a quality which they share to a large degree with urbanized Scandinavian and British children but which distinguishes them from such contemporary societies as Israel, where kibbutz children tend gardens and animals from a very early age and elementary school children in Jerusalem took on such community responsibilities as mail delivery and garbage collection during the Six Day War (de Shalit, 1970); or mainland China, where elementary school workshops turn out machine components for buses and other heavy equipment, and all school children spend a month-and-a half a year in some form of productive labor (Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, 1972; Munro, 1971).

The past decade has witnessed a counter trend away from the Spokian child-centeredness of the 1950's and early 1960's. Not only is there accumulating evidence that many American children are not being adequately cared for, but there are also indications of a general devaluation of children and child rearing.

It is clear that the traditional reasons for wanting children -- i.e., for economic reasons or to extend the family line or family name -- have all but disappeared in modern secularized societies. It has been argued that as children have lost their economic and familiar value to parents, they have become more valued in a qualitative sense, as they provide adults with

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personal experiences and pleasure of a unique sort (Berelson, 1972). Evaluation of this argument requires an understanding of some very complex demographic trends as well as weighing of what little survey data are available on the subject. It does seem that there is less wanting of children among Americans than in the past and that those who do want children want fewer of them (see, e.g., Campbell et al., 1969; Kahn, 1973; Boocock, 1973a: 17ff). However, we still know very little about people's reasons for wanting -- or not wanting -- children, nor do we know much about their attitudes and behavior toward the children they have. Among the more disturbing kinds of evidence are the widespread incidence of physical abuse, increasing rates of illegitimacy, and increases in the number of children without adult supervision for long periods of time.

The actual size of the child abuse problem remains a mystery. Some 60,000 cases a year are reported in the United States, though it is felt that many cases, especially in middle and upper-class homes, go unreported. A 1964 study of California children concluded that about 20,000 were in need of protective services. A study of Denver, Colorado showed that in a sample year, approximately 100 cases were referred monthly to the Welfare Department for services resulting from serious physical abuse (Zalba, 1971). Hospital emergency room studies indicate that possibly ten per cent of children who are treated for accidents are actually victims of maltreatment (Day Care Council of New York, 1972:7). A survey of New York City children concluded that at least 1 per cent of the deaths of children under age six were caused by parental abuse, and some pediatricians interviewed believed that "if the true statistics were known, child abuse would be the most common cause of death in children" (Day Care Council of New York, 1972: 8).

The rates of out-of-wedlock births have increased in the United States, especially among the youngest females of childbearing age, at the same time that legal abortion is becoming increasingly available (White House Conference on Children, 1970: 54). An especially disturbing trend in some areas of the country is the increase in multiple pregnancies among unmarried high school girls, more of whom elect to keep their babies than was formerly the case among unmarried mothers (Cottman, 1971). Illegitimacy per se does not guarantee inadequate care. However, except in the few societies where concerted efforts have been made to remove the stigma of illegitimacy and to assure that all children have access to necessary services (e.g., Sweden -- see Linner, 1967), children of unmarried mothers often spend the first years of life in settings characterized by uninformed and desultory care.

Many children who escape physical abuse suffer from serious neglect. Indicators of neglect take a variety of forms. There have been increases in the number of divorce cases in which neither parent wants custody of the children (Otto, 1973). There are clues that many children ostensibly in the care of their own parents are in fact, left without care for long periods of time. This kind of information is difficult to obtain, since few parents willingly admit to leaving young children unattended. A 1966 Swedish study found some 3,000 children under seven years of age left unsupervised while their parents were at work (Roby, 1973: 308). A study by the Child Welfare League estimated that in 1965, almost a million American children under 14 were left on their own while their parents were at work, of whom 7,000 were under the age of six; another million were left in the care of older brothers and sisters under 16 or relatives over 65 (Child Welfare League, 1969: 3). At recent federal and state hearings, a number of working class women testified

that they had left ill pre-schoolers unattended in locked apartments because they feared losing their job if they stayed home with them (California Commission on the Status of Women, 1968).

What constitutes neglect of a child is still not clearly defined. Pre-school children left alone in an apartment while their parents are at work are obvious cases of neglect, but there are some more general and subtle trends that suggest that our entire society may be becoming less child-oriented. Time studies indicate that Americans are spending less time in child care than they did in the past, and cross-national studies show that Americans spend less time than parents in other countries for which time data are available (Robinson and Converse, 1972). Ironically, American women are spending more time than ever on housework, but large amounts of this time are devoted to the care and repair of "time-saving" appliances and to the shopping that is an important component of a consumption-oriented society. Moreover, a large chunk of many mothers' "child care" time is spent in chauffering their children. Although I have not discovered any comprehensive studies of how much and how parent-child time is actually spent, some informants (e.g., Rowe, 1973; Barbara Finberg, personal communication) estimate that even non-gainfully-employed mothers may spend as little as fifteen or twenty minutes a day in actual communication with their pre-school children and that many children have no other daily meaningful contact with adults.

Part of the apparent increases in the incidence of child abuse and neglect may be due to fuller reporting and to changes in the law. For example, changes in the libel laws make it less risky for pediatricians,

social workers, and neighbors to report cases of possible child abuse. Recent work by historians also suggests that mistreatment of children may have been even more widespread in the past, in the United States and elsewhere. Moreover, there can be honest differences of opinion in a pluralistic society about the best way to care for young children. Granting all of these possible qualifications, it still seems clear: (a) that American children's problems are, if anything, still underreported, partly because children rarely earn income and pay taxes, cannot vote, and have few legal rights, and are thus in a sense invisible; and (b) that the insufficiency of adequate care for young children has reached crisis proportions and constitutes a major policy issue for our society.

Social Trends Affecting the Status of Children

While the care of young children is problematic in any society, my analysis suggests that the current "crisis" in child care is the result of a combination of social trends unique to modern industrialized societies. The following seem to be the major ones:

1) Changes in sex roles which downgrade parenthood and child rearing

It is difficult to construct an image of the "traditional" role of the parent unbiased by analysts' opinions about what family life should be like. Historical analysis suggests that the American parent role has been characterized by, on the one hand, virtually total responsibility for the care and supervision of children, and, on the other hand, relatively limited authority. "Only when a child reached age six did society at large take a major hand by insisting that he attend school and by providing schools at the taxpayers' expense. What happens to the child the rest of the time is his parents' business. Society intervenes only if he is severely abused or

neglected or runs afoul of the law" (Schultze et al, 1972: 253). At the same time, the dynamic, individualistic nature of American society gave family life a relatively temporary quality which limited the authority of parents. European visitors to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries noted not only that American children had a position of relative equality and a say in family affairs which would have been unthinkable in Europe, but that American parents "give very little advice to their children and let them learn for themselves" (from Rousiers, La Vie Americaine, quoted in Sorel, 1950: 89).

However, until recently, Americans have at least given lip service to the cliche that the presence of children strengthens the family. Now that central assumption seems to be in question. Data gathered during the last two decades show rather consistently that the presence of children has a negative rather than a positive effect upon the husband-wife relationships. Members of childless marriages report greater marital satisfaction than those with children; among marriages with children, the greater the number of children, the lower the satisfaction reported by the parents; and on a variety of marital satisfaction indices, satisfaction drops sharply with the birth of the first child, sinks even lower during the school years, and goes up markedly only after the exit of the last child (for a discussion of studies on the effects of children upon marriage, see Bernard, 1972: Chapter 4; Senn and Hartford, 1968 provides a more descriptive account of the stress experienced by young parents with their first born).

One explanation for the current discontinuities in the parent role is that life in most areas of our society does not allow young people to experience the role expectations and tasks of parenthood before they actually take on the role. (It should also be noted that parenthood is one of the few

adult roles that can be taken on without presenting any kind of "credentials."). Our small nuclear families and increasingly age-segregated residential communities do not allow potential parents opportunities to observe young children or to communicate regularly with older persons with extensive parenting experience. By contrast with a society like Sweden, where boys and girls, from the elementary school years, have classes in sex education, home maintenance, child care, and the dynamics of family life (Linner, 1967), American schools offer little in the way of practical education in subjects relevant to family life. What preparation for parenthood exists during pregnancy is dependent upon the initiative of the parents-to-be and is largely confined to reading and informal consultation with friends. As Rossi (1967) points out, the most concrete action most parents-to-be take is to prepare the baby's room. The birth of the child thus constitutes an abrupt transition rather than a gradual taking on of the responsibilities of a new role. While there is a flood of advice from "experts" on every aspect of child development and care, the very existence of so much expertise may discourage rather than reassure the new parent, since it sets such a high level of expectations for their role performance.

Another explanation is that the responsibilities and skills involved in caring for young children are increasingly in conflict with other things adults value, both within and outside of marriage. Among the findings of the Detroit Area Study is that proportionately more women in the 1970's than in the 1950's said that companionship with husband was the most valuable part of marriage (60% in 1971 compared to 48% in 1955); while fewer said their prime motive in marriage was the chance to have children (from 26% in 1955 to 13% in 1971. Duncan et al., 1973: 8). Certainly the self-development

which is an important component of an individualistic society is at variance with the constant attention and the frequent selflessness required in the nurturance of babies and young children. Likewise, the youthfulness and glamour which are so valued for both sexes in America are inconsistent with childrearing.

Finally, parenthood may bring to the surface unresolved, and even unrecognized conflicts about the appropriate roles of men and women. However much in principle the couple may value sexual equalitarianism, the arrival of a child means that someone must be available 24 hours a day to care for it. It seems unlikely that current difficulties in the relationships between men and women in our society will be resolved until questions concerning both the value of children and the locus of responsibility for their routine care and supervision are acknowledged and resolved.

In addition to the problems peculiar to the parent role in general, the mother and father roles each have unique problems related to changes in sex roles in our society.

Among the most significant and most discussed changes of the past decade are the changes in women's lives, including the rebirth of feminism in the women's liberation movement. I shall here concentrate upon the aspects of these changes which most directly affected the position and care of children. The most obvious and thoroughly documented is the rising propensity of women to work outside of the home. The number and proportion of women in the labor force goes up every time a survey is taken, and during the past decade the rates of participation of mothers have increased

more rapidly than the rates for women in general. In 1970, the mothers of nearly 26 million children under 18 years old were in the labor force. Almost 6 million of these children were under six, that is below regular school age and requiring some kind of care in their mother's absence. By contrast, ten years earlier, mothers of 15.7 million children under 18 were in the labor force, of whom about 4 million were below school age. Mothers of pre-school age children are less likely to be in the labor force than those of school age children -- in 1970, a third of all mothers with at least one child under 6 were in the labor force, compared with about half of the mothers whose children were six to 17 years old. However, labor force participation rates of mothers of pre-schoolers have increased more rapidly in the last decade, up 60% as compared with 20% for mothers of school age children (Waldman and Gover, 1971: 19). Survey data also indicate that many American mothers not now working would do so if they could find someone to take care of their children. Thus we seem to be on our way to a society in which most women, including the mothers of young children, will be employed outside of the home.

The trend toward employment outside of the home and less than full-time commitment to motherhood seems to be an international one, although the rates and patterns of the increase vary from one society to another. In Sweden, the past decade has also been one of substantial increase in the number of married women employed outside the home, from 30% in 1960 to 53% in 1973. Having young children is apparently less of an impediment to the

employment of women, since more than half of the mothers with at least one child under age 7 work (in Sweden, compulsory education begins at 7 instead of at 6 as in the United States, although the school entrance age may be lowered to 6 in the near future). This may be related to what seemed to me a more widespread acceptance in Sweden that the community and the state as a whole were to share responsibility with parents for the care of young children. In Israel, women constitute about 50% of the total labor force, a higher proportion than in the United States, but a smaller proportion of Israeli than American women work outside the home -- 30% of all Jewish women; about 25% of married Jewish women, and a very small but rapidly increasing proportion of the Arab women. As in the U.S. labor force, participation is related both to the age of children (from 20.6% for mothers whose youngest child is less than 2 years old, to 33.3% for mothers whose youngest child is 10-13 years old) and size of family (36.5% for mothers with only one child; 27.5% with two children, and down to 15.8% with three or more children. Statistical Abstract of Israel #22, 1970: 284).

Because of a combination of economic and ideological reasons, the employment of women in paid work is generally higher in communist than capitalistic societies. Women constitute approximately half of the labor force in the Soviet Union, and the labor force participation of women ages twenty to fifty is approximately 85% (Roby, 1973: 388). Reliable empirical data on the employment of women in mainland China are unavailable, although recent visitors observed virtually no full women devoting themselves solemly to housework and care of their own children. The strong

ideological thrust of Maoism toward the full development and use of "womenpower," changes in the marriage law which have in turn produced basic changes in family structure, and a vigorous national program of birth control have altered the roles of parents and children in very basic ways, but we still lack sufficient in-depth information to evaluate the effects of these large changes.

In any country, the desire to work seems to be related to a woman's educational background and occupational qualifications. In the few countries which allow working mothers to take a paid leave for up to three years after the birth of a child, women with higher qualifications, better jobs, and higher salaries are much less likely to use the grants. (In Hungary, for example, only 30.2% of the mothers with college education, compared with 73.8% of the women with primary education have used the grants -- Roby, 1973: 355). In other words, if a society gave women a real choice between working outside the home or staying home to care for young children, by providing both adequate grants for the mothers who chose to stay in the home and adequate day care facilities for those who chose to work outside, one would predict that the women who would choose the former would more likely be those of the lower socio-economic levels, who could obtain only the more menial kinds of jobs, while women who had the qualifications for interesting and well-paying work would prefer that to full-time child care. The general point is that offering a real choice to women could possibly widen rather than narrow the class gaps between women, and between children.

The effect upon children of their mother's employment has been heatedly debated, the claims more often based upon the writer's personal biases than upon any substantial body of empirical evidence. There are some Swedish studies showing no substantial or consistent differences in either school achievement or social adjustment between children whose mothers work outside the home and those who do not, although there are more problems if the mother has to work for economic reasons than if she is working for"professional enthusiasm" (Leijon, 1968: 98). The most thorough analysis of the available American research, by Lois Hoffman (1963), concludes that there is no unequivocal evidence that outside employment of mothers affects children favorably or unfavorably. "So many other factors enter into the picture -- social class, full-time versus part-time employment, age and sex of the child, and the mother's attitude toward the employment -- that the impact of employment per se is lost in the shuffle" (Bernard, 1972: 78).

A second important kind of change in women's lives is in their orientations toward the motherhood role. One of the most important by-products of the women's liberation movement is that many women no longer feel that they should be solely responsible for the day-to-day care of young children -- or even that they should be "naturally" interested in children. Part of this may be explained by the generally low status generally accorded to those who care for and educate children. In no society that I have studied has child care ever paid well or accorded high status or prestige, compared to work involving the manipulation of money, power, and/or ideas.

The care of young children has always been allocated to persons with relatively low positions in the society -- to slaves and domestic servants, to persons in "non-productive" years or categories, such as girls and older persons who have "retired" from "real" work in the society, and to women. Thus one of the consequences of the "consciousness raising" aspects of the women's liberation movement is that, as women come to think more highly of themselves as human beings and cease to think of themselves as the "second" -- and by definition inferior -- sex, they will also be less willing to perform the tasks in the society that do not carry less weight and prestige, including the more tedious aspects of child care.

If the sex which has traditionally taken most of the burden for the care of young children is now laying down at least part of the burden, is the sex which has previously had a smaller share of child care responsibilities going to pick up that burden? The role of the father has received relatively little attention in the sociological and child development literature. The most recent full-length sociological analysis (Benson, 1968) notes that the father role links the family with the larger society, and has been the embodiment within the family of the social control function. Until recently he has not had much to do with the housekeeping and childrearing functions.

Benson also points out the distinction between biological and social fatherhood, and notes that these two functions have not always been filled by the same man. The latter was a social invention which has taken a

variety of forms in different societies. Children have been raised in the home of their mother's relatives, and have been provided for by their uncles, stepfathers, and older brothers as well as by their biological fathers. Benson concludes that: "The biological father, the progenitor is not as important as the social or nurturant father precisely because the latter has a family role to play after conception" (Benson, 1968: 44).

One of the problems in the United States and other industrialized societies is that the social father role is not being filled in many families by the biological father or any other male. In 1970, seven million American children under age 14 (over 10% of all children in that age category) were being raised in families in which the father was absent (White House Conference on Children, 1970: 22, 141), and while some of these children undoubtedly have meaningful relationships with men other than their biological fathers, there is also evidence that many of them do not. Studies of lower class "streetcorner" men, such as Liebow's Talley's Corner (1966) and Hannerz's Soulside (1969) show how peripheral these men are to the lives of the children they have fathered. Nor do the mother's boyfriends who pass through the ghetto homes in which the children are reared normally develop father-like relationships with them.

Unlike the mother's, the father's position in the family is strongly related to his position in systems outside of the family. One explanation for the streetcorner man's lack of welcome in the homes where their children are raised is that they have failed to achieve occupational status and security. Likewise, Komarovsky's study of unemployed blue collar workers (1971) showed how the loss of a man's job led to the decline of his position vis-a-vis his wife and children.

While there have been some recent pleas for a "return to fatherhood" in this country, it is not possible with the currently available research to conclude whether fatherhood was a more fully developed role in the past. It is true that households and communities in which a man's work was typically in or near his home allowed a father to be in contact with his children more often during the normal course of a workday than in our present metropolitan areas where the place of work is usually at a distance from the home (and the time added on to the work day by commuting often cancels out any time advantages won by the trend toward shorter hours of work). However, the distance imposed by the more authoritarian character of the father role in the past may have outweighed the advantages gained by mere physical proximity. It should also be noted that the call for greater activation of the father role can be differently interpreted. Male writers calling for a "return to fatherhood" are usually expressing nostalgia for the undisputed authority of the male head of the household attributed to the traditional families of the past. Women, on the other hand, are usually asking not for a return to a form of family life perceived by them as oppressive for both women and children but rather: (a) for men to show more interest in and affection for young children; and (b) for a more equitable distribution of the more onerous duties involved in caring for them.

Rhetoric to the contrary, there is little evidence of a strong trend toward male caretakers of young children. The few well publicized cases of "paternity leave," where fathers have won the right to spend more time at home caring for their children without the loss of their job or its fringe benefits, have so far been limited to a few occupations, such as

teaching, that allow relatively flexible working schedules. Scandinavian corporations and agencies which allow men to work less than full time in order to share domestic responsibilities with their wives report that few men have so far taken advantage of the "opportunity" (interviews with Siv Thorsell, Anita Soderlund). Although it is now Swedish policy to recruit men into day care center positions, in the few centers where I observed any men at all, there was usually one, and he was usually a conscientious objector or an older man who was for some reason unemployed. (Of course the Swedish policy is so new that it is unfair to draw conclusions about its success, and developments there should be followed). I observed no men in any of the day care centers or kibbutz children's homes I visited in Israel, and some of the Israeli men I questioned actually recoiled at the notion that men might work in such places. Mirra Komarovsky's current studies of American college men indicate that while many give lip service to the general principle of equality and liberation for women, most assume that <u>their</u> future wife will stay home with the children during their pre-school years and arrange her working schedule around their school hours if she later goes to work. "Though they were willing to aid their wives in varying degrees, they frequently excluded specific tasks, for instance, 'not the laundry,' 'not the cleaning,' 'not the diapers,' and so on" (Komarovsky, 1973: 879).

In sum, the ideology concerning the role of the father does seem to be changing in modern industrialized societies, but there is still a large gap between the rhetoric of a more active, equalitarian role and the actual behavior of men in the role. Nor do we have the institutional arrangements

which would allow -- and motivate -- men to change their role behavior. Furthermore, whether or not one views the relationships between men and women as "political," there is a clear conflict of interest between the sexes with regard to the allocation of child care responsibilities, and at the moment, the children are the losers.

2) Changes in the structure of households and loss of child care options outside the family. Historians are just beginning to clarify the way children were raised in the past, but several recent studies suggest that surprisingly many of them were raised or spent large amounts of time with adults other than their natural parents. (Aries, 1962; Hunt, 1970; Laslett, 1972). Households of the past were larger, and were more likely to contain not only grandparents and other relatives but also apprentices, servants, and other persons not related by blood. They were also more likely to contain the male head of the household for longer periods of time, since his work was often in or near the home. Thus the care of children could be shared by a greater number of persons.

Anthropological studies have shown that caretakers have been of all ages (including only slightly older children), both sexes, and many locations in the kinship structure (see, for example Mead and Wolfenstein, 1955). Grandparents are the most common caretakers in some societies. The "babushka" has played an important role in Russian society, where three-generation households are still common. Indeed a concern of some students of Russian society is that as Russian women gain more education and work experience, they become less willing to stay home and care for grandchildren, which will mean that child care in the home will soon no longer be a viable

alternative to state nurseries and kindergartens (Jacoby, 1971). Although statistics on mainland China are still largely unavailable, recent visitors estimate that more than half the children aged 18 months to 3 years are cared for by a grandparent, and the proportion is considerably higher in rural communes, where child care centers are few and their facilities very inadequate (Sidel, 1972; Printz, 1973). Unmarried girls have been a major source of child care, from the ubiquitous part-time American babysitter to the institutionalized full time use of unmarried girls and women in the Bruderhof and other utopian communities where virtually all married women hold jobs outside the home (Zablocki, 1971: 122ff).

One of the most important trends of this century with respect to the care of children has been the disappearance of the maid. In 1900, nearly half of all working women were domestic servants or farmhands. By 1960, the proportion had dropped to one tenth, and by 1970 to less than four per cent (Kahn, 1973: 156-157). A portion of the child care services formerly performed by maids were taken on by the babysitter. Informal investigation indicates that the majority of American children, whether or not their mothers are employed outside the home, have been cared for by babysitters, and that more American adolescents earn money from babysitting than from any other kind of job. However, there are no comprehensive empirical data on how many babysitters there are, who they are, what they do, and what they earn, nor do we know to what extent babysitting provides young people with anticipatory socialization for parenthood.

Historical and cross-cultural research shows that child rearing outside of the parental home is not uncommon. In wealthy families in both Europe and the orient, the pattern from medieval times until well into the 18th

century was a kind of exchange of children, such that children at a very early age were sent to live with another family, whom they "served" until adulthood, and sometimes after. The American apprenticeship system has already been mentioned. The custom of sending off unwanted children to farms on the Western frontier, originally a largely within-family arrangement, was continued on a non-familial basis by 19th century reformers and organizations -- for example, Charles Loring Brace's "placing-out" system, one of the programs of the New York Children's Aid Society which he founded (Hawes, 1971: Chapter 5). Perhaps the most specialized care is provided in Israeli kibbutzim, where children live, with a small group of their age peers, in a series of children's homes, each with its own kitchen, bedrooms, bathing facilities, and at certain age levels, classroom. Each children's house is under the direction of a "metapelet" or nurse, who has been chosen by the community because of her interest and ability to work with a particular age level, who has received specialized training at colleges operated by the kibbutz federations, and who cares for successive "generations" of children of the same age level. Metapelets are themselves members of the kibbutz, and like virtually all adult members, are usually wives and mothers themselves. Metapelets are assisted by other women from the community, again who have chosen this work from among the types of jobs available to the women

of the community (Bettelheim, 1969; Spiro, 1965; personal interviews with kibbutz members). One of the most interesting experiments in group caretaking of infants and young children is now in process at the Synanon communities in the United States, where children live in a series of children's homes, cared for by adult members who have chosen this kind of work, as in the kibbutz. Unlike the kibbutz, however, parents' day-to-day involvement in the life of the child is not a crucial component of the caretaking system. While many mothers visit the children's home each day, there is no segment of the day which children regularly spend with their parents, and many children do not see their parents at all for weeks or even longer. Like most positions in the Synanon community, each caretaker's position is filled by a pair of individuals who alternate in performing the role. Workers in the children's homes generally work ten hours a day for seven days, after which they have seven days off during which time the role is filled by their "partner." (Interview with Elizabeth Missakian).

The one characteristic which the caretakers of young children in most societies share is their relatively low position in the society. Moreover, in all of the societies I studied, the younger the children the caretaker works with, the lower the pay. As far as I can tell, until now the caretaker role has been filled by persons from one or more of the following groups:

-- slaves and servants (the lowest level in any society)

-- young people (usually girls who have not yet entered into "productive" work in the society, and older people who have retired from it;

-- women of all ages (the link between day care and women's rights has been pointed out by many feminists, who argue that women cannot gain high status or have equal opportunity in any job until they are released from sole responsibility for the routine care of young children).

In sum, while there is no evidence that homes in the past were consciously organized for the care of children -- in fact, children were less likely to be considered full human beings worthy of love and care than they are now (Aries, 1962) -- the economic and other functions of the home necessitated an organization which, at the same time, assured that a number of persons were available to share in looking after children. Most of these functions have been lost to the family, and at the same time, the close of the frontier, the decrease in the proportion of the population engaged in farming, and the enactment of compulsory education and child labor laws have removed many arrangements outside of the home which relieved many parents of the burdens of child rearing.

3) A serious imbalance in the supply and and demand for child care. This seems to be one of the largest unrecognized problems in modern societies. During the past year, I have observed day care centers and nursery schools in the United States, Sweden, and Israel. In each country, some of my visits were on registration days (often for enrollment a year in advance). In every case, all places were filled within a few hours of the opening of registration. Mothers often waited in line throughout the preceeding night in hopes of ensuring a place for their children, and directors were confronted with pleading and often tearful or hysterical women, begging them to allow their children to be enrolled. Day care administrators, government officials, and researchers I talked with agreed that any new facilities opened within

the next few years would be immediately filled -- and would not meet the current demand. While no country seems to have accurate figures on the exact number of children in need of care or the exact number and type of places available, the most responsible estimates in Sweden (Rosengren, 1973) and the U.S. (Roby, 1973; Featherstone, 1970) are that places at centers or homes with any kind of governmental licensing or approval are available for no more than 20 per cent of the children who need them (i.e., whose parents are gainfully employed). These estimates do not include families who would like and possibly use day care if it were available, including large numbers of women who would prefer to work but have no one to look after their children. Of the nations reviewed in Roby's recent volume on child care (1973), only in the Soviet Union did the observer encounter no families who were having difficulty in enrolling children in a pre-school program and no waiting lists for such schools.

Group care of children has been available in the United States, on a small scale, for over a century. The first day nursery opened in Boston in 1838, to provide care for the children of seamen's wives and widows, and by the end of the nineteenth century there were about 175 day nurseries in various parts of the country, mostly operated by settlement houses and other charitable organizations for the children of poor working mothers. A later development was the nursery school, which was also clearly distinguishable from the day nursery by its clientele (mostly middle and upper class and relatively well educated), its emphasis upon education and development, and its shorter hours (usually about three hours a day, which meant that it was not a feasible form of care for employed mothers. In fact, many nursery

schools were "cooperative," with some or all of the mothers serving as part-time caretakers. For a brief history of group child care in America, see Roby, 1973: Chapter 10).

The first extensive American experience with group care was during World War II, when the Lanham Act provided 51 million dollars for 3,000 local day care centers in labor shortage areas, and the Kaiser Corporation alone cared for 3,800 children in twenty-four-hour-a-day centers located in company plants (Roby, 1973: Chapter 14; Grotberg, 1972: 78-79).

In retrospect, the post World War II period, characterized by an unusually high birth rate, a strong familistic orientation throughout the society, and the "feminine" mystique which is now derided by feminist writers, seems a kind of historical freak. Actually the prevailing attitude in this country has always been that group care of children is unnatural, if not actually harmful, and that the good mother is one who stays at home. The later 1940's and 1950's were simply a period in which socio-economic conditions -- a labor market in which neither government nor industry employers perceived a need for recruiting more female employees, the virtual disappearance of domestic service as an occupation, and economic affluence which allowed the majority of the big new families to be supported by the husband's income, along with the persuasive arguments of Bowlby and others about the dangers of maternal deprivation -- were all consistent with stay-at-home mothers. Or to put it another way, there were no strong trends, such as a labor shortage, that went against the American preference for young children to be cared for in their own homes by their own mothers.

Now that so many mothers have entered the labor force, despite the dire warnings of the child development specialists and the impediments our society continues to place in the way of working mothers, there have been some attempts to gather information about the children of non-employed women, although there are clues that the amount of actual interaction between non-employed mothers and their children is surprisingly small; that nearly all mothers use some kind of outside caretakers; and that these child care arrangements are largely informal and involve little or no monetary payment.) Table 1 shows the results of two separate and not entirely comparable, national surveys of working mothers. In 1970, as in 1965, half of the pre-school children were cared for in their own home; about one third were cared for in someone else's home, a slight increase from 1965; and ten per cent were in day care centers, almost double the proportion in centers five years earlier. A study by the Child Welfare League estimated that in 1965, almost a million children under 14 were left on their own while their parents were at work, of whom 7,000 were under the age of six; another million were left in the care of older brothers and sisters under 16 or relatives over 65 (Child Welfare League, 1969: 3).

All surveys of the day care facilities in this country show that the capacity is far less than the need. A 1967 survey by the Child Welfare League found a total of 34,700 licensed facilities, with a capacity for 475,200 children. Of these, 10,400 of the facilities were day care centers, with space for 393,300 children (an average of 37.8 children per center); the remaining were 24,300 licensed family day care homes, with places for 81,900 children (an average of 3.4 children per home). More recent estimates

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers, by Age of Children, 1965 and 1970.

	Age of Children			
	Under 6 Years		6 to 14 years	
Child Care Arrangement	1965[a]	1970[b]	1965[a]	1970[b]
Care in own home	48.0	49.9	66.0	78.7
- By father	14.4	18.4	15.1	10.6
- By other relative	17.5	18.9	22.6	20.6
- By a nonrelative	15.3	7.3	6.8	4.5
- Mother worked during child's school hours	0.8	5.2	21.5	42.9
Care in someone else's home	30.7	34.5	9.2	12.6
- By a relative	14.9	15.5	4.7	7.6
- By a nonrelative	15.8	19.0	4.5	5.0
Day care Center	5.6	10.5	0.6	0.6
No special Care[c]	15.7	5.0	24.3	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Schultze et al, 1973: 261.

a. When several kinds of care were used for the same child, the predominating and most recent child care arrangement is given.
b. Child care arrangements on the last day the mother worked.
c. Includes child looked after self, mother looked after child while working, and other.

based upon March 1971 data from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare indicate that there has been a substantial increase in the number of places in licensed centers and homes, but that the 905,000 places now available are still not close to the estimated several million children who need some kind of day care service (Women's Bureau, 1973:2). Although there are no reliable statistics, all researchers on day care agree that the number of unlicensed day care places is far greater than the number of places in licensed homes and centers. Roby feels that "private child-minding" is a bigger "industry" than anyone imagines, and she estimates that more than half of the American children under six are now regularly cared for in some kind of regular arrangement at least part time. She also estimates that as many as ninety per cent of all parents would use organized day care regularly if it met certain basic criteria such as low cost, nearness to the home, and flexibility of hours.

The most comprehensive data available on the supply and demand for day care are from Sweden, a country that is so thorough in its analysis of social problems and so open in reporting the extent to which problems remain unsolved that a recent report contained computations or "excess enrollments" in pre-schools (that is, the percentages of children actually attending pre-schools beyond the number of legitimate places available. These rates have been running between twelve and fifteen per cent for the past five years, with a slight increase in excess enrollment each year (Rosengren, 1973: 6-7). The basic types of licensed day care and the number of available places in each are shown in Table 2. Twenty per cent of all Swedish parents have children in day care centers (daghem) and another twenty per cent

leave their children with licensed day care mothers (familjadaghem). Moreover, the number of places in licensed centers and homes increased about 700 per cent between 1965 and 1970, a hugh increase compared with that in the United States during the same period. Licensed day care is differentially available in different parts of the country. There are actually unused places in Stockholm, while the severest shortages are in the new towns where many young families live and university towns which now have a high proportion of married students. Throughout the country, priority is given to children with the greatest need, such as children of single parents.

In addition to government approved and subsidized caretakers, it is estimated that 60,000 children are in private family day nurseries, and there are some 20,000 "home helps," private maids or mother's helpers (Leijon, 1968: 90-91). As in this country, the servant role is a disappearing one, and grandmothers and other relatives are less and less available as child caretakers. Swedish nursery schools (lekskola), like American ones, take children for only about three hours a day. The Swedes acknowledge that at least forty per cent of the parents of pre-schoolers have no satisfactory solution to the child care problem, and that the present shortage is expected to continue throughout the 1970's.

Reliable statistics on child caretakers in Israel are harder to obtain. This is partly because child care, like most social services in Israel, has been devised and delivered under emergency conditions, in particular the pressures caused by the waves in in-migration, which have brought everything from child-survivors of the World War II holocaust to the children of the most impoverished Oriental Jewish populations. In one survey over half of all Israeli children were diagnosed as culturally disadvantaged

Table 2 - Swedish Day Care: Types and Numbers of Places in Government Approved Facilities

# of Places in:	daghem (day care or nurseries)	lekskolar (play or nursery school)	fritidshem (free time centers)	familjedaghem (municipal family day nurseries)
1950	9,700	18,700	2,400	1,500
1965	11,900	52,100	3,000	8,000
1970	33,000	86,000	6,500	32,000
1972 (estimates)	52,000	105,000	10,000	45,000

Source: Children's Day-homes 1970/71, National Central Bureau of Statistics, Stockholm.

and in need of some kind of compensatory education or service (interview with Joseph Marcus). Also until recently most child care services were provided on a private basis or in institutions set up by the women's voluntary organizations which have initiated so many of the social services and reforms in Israel.

Finally, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of child care and caretakers because they come from such a complex and uncoordinated set of organizations and authorities. The following paragraphs will outline the major sources of care for children, roughly in order of the age of the children served.

Mother and child clinics (Tipot Halav). These are part of the National Health Services and provide prenatal and child health care up to age five. The service includes home visits by nurses. The focus is on inculcating standards of hygiene, good feeding methods, and awareness of children's physical development. The clinics are highly respected and trusted and are used by most Israeli mothers of all social levels. The clinic staff do not, however, serve as real caretakers of children.

Day care homes and centers. Below age three there is no formal system of government approved and subsidized day care. Until recently it has been provided almost entirely on a private basis, in local neighborhoods (on a walk through almost any neighborhood of Jerusalem, one passes several small "home nurseries," where up to a dozen pre-schoolers are being casually looked after by one or two women) or in centers set up by women's voluntary organizations. A 1969 study reported that there were 280 day nurseries in the country taking care of some 9,000 children (less than 10 per cent of the children in this age category). Fifty-two per cent of all the nurseries were run by the Working Mothers' Association of the Women Workers' Council

of the General Federation of Labor (Moetzet Hapoalot); 22 per cent by the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO); only three per cent by municipalities and local councils, and the rest by a variety of other voluntary organizations. Only about 10 per cent ran for a full day and provided meals (Demographic Center, 1971, translated by Laura Starr).

Pre-kindergartens (gan hesiut).* These are non-compulsory pre-schools for three and four-year olds, subsidized through the state but run through municipalities. About half of the 95,000 children in this age category attend either a municipal or a private gan. (About 20 per cent are private and attended mainly by children of well-to-do families.) About 32,000 of the 40,000 children attending a gan receive a subsidy from the Ministry of Education. One important function of the gan is to assimilate the children of new Israeli citizens into the society and to narrow the very substantial gaps between the various ethnic groups that comprise modern Israel. Thus there is a clear policy of favoritism at this level -- virtually all the children in immigrant villages and about 80 per cent of the children in new development towns (populated largely by recent immigrants and members of underprivileged groups) attend a pre-kindergarten. Most meet five hours daily and thus serve an educational rather than a strictly caretaking function. There are some current proposals to extend the gan day, so that children of working mothers could stay until at least 4:00 p.m., with two hours rest and a light meal in the afternoon, but to date only about fifty of the 1,500 to 2,000 long-day units needed have been financed (Harman, 1969).

* Gan is an inclusive word for kindergarten of pre-school.

Kindergarten (gan hovah). These are free and compulsory, although parents have a choice of a religious or non-religious school. Nearly all five-year-olds attend. Like pre-kindergartens, kindergartens meet for only a few hours a day, and there are efforts to provide "long-day" facilities at this level also. The government has also recently begun to support an additional year of compulsory kindergarten for disadvantaged four-year-olds, a kind of Israeli Head Start program with a focus upon language skills.

The short supply of child care has a number of unfortunate consequences. One consequence is high levels of anxiety and dissatisfaction among many parents. As the last director of OCD has put it, we have no idea how many American women's lives have been warped by their inability to get any kind of relief from the 24-hour-a-day care of young children (Edward Zigler, quoted in Orth, 1973). Another consequence is recourse to protcksia (Israeli term for political privilege or pull) and dishonesty to circumvent rules or priorities (e.g., in Sweden, many married couples claim to be unmarried since unwed mothers have first choice at government subsidized day care centers).

Some of the most intriguing reports about major innovations in caretaking come from recent visitors to mainland China. There are three levels of preschool care in China today:

Nursery rooms. For babies from about two to eighteen months. These are usually located in the mother's workplace, and mothers are given time off, usually twice a day, to breast-feed their babies or, if not breast-feeding, just to hold or play with them. Factory nursery rooms are staffed by "aunties," who have no special training but who are chosen from among the workers in the factory who are the "most responsible and the most patient" (Sidel, 1972: 93). These facilities are widely used. Sidel claims that only about 10 per cent of the mothers of preschoolers are not in the labor market and take full care of their own children.

Nurseries. For children from about eighteen months to three years. These are also usually located at the piace of employment, so that parents may be close to their children, although a child may be placed in a nursery in his father's as well as his mother's factory. Reliable figures are not available, but it is estimated that about half of all the children in this age category are in nurseries; the other half are cared for by grandparents (many of whom live with or near their children) or neighbors. In rural areas, the proportion of children in nurseries is less, the proportion cared for by grandparents more.

Kindergartens. For children from age three to school age (about 7½). The majority of Chinese children attend kindergarten (about 80% in the cities, somewhat less in the country). Unlike the nursery rooms and nurseries, kindergartens are most likely to be located in the child's

neighborhood and they are generally run by neighborhood revolutionary committees.

In the rural communes, care is more informal. Where group care is available, nurseries and kindergartens may be combined. In rural communities, day care is likely to be used sporadically, for example, during the harvest season, when pregnant women and persons with physical handicaps care for little children so that everyone else can work in the fields.

Several unique features of the caretaker role in contemporary China can be noted. First, care of infants and young children is characterized by what Sidel terms "multiple mothering." During the course of a typical day, a Chinese child may be cared for by his biological mother (while nursing, before and after work, and on days off), by aunties or nursery workers (women chosen for their motherly qualities), and by grandparents when they live in or near his home. Moreover, he is likely to see the same set of caretakers day after day; it is claimed that there is very low turnover of personnel in nursing rooms, nurseries and kindergartens. Second, there is a consistency of orientation and very little interpersonal competition among the various persons caring for the young child. In contrast to the diversity of child caring patterns characteristic of our country and the underlying suspicions and conflict between parents and day care personnel, I sometimes observed in the United States, Sweden, and Israel, there is apparently widespread agreement among Chinese caretakers that they wish all children to develop the values of loving and helping each other, of "serving the people" and putting the needs of the society ahead of personal interests, and of identifying with physical labor and those who perform it (Sidel, 1972: 82; Committee of

Concerned Asian Scholars, 1972: 287-291). Third, there is no move toward professionalism of credentialism with respect to the caretaker role -- in fact, current trends are in the opposite direction. Personnel at all levels of pre-school "are recruited far more on the basis of personality characteristics than on any kind of formal training, and we had the feeling that the Chinese consider a warm motherly type with common sense the best sort of person to care for small children. This anti-expert bias is, of course, reflective of what is going on in society at large" (Sidel, 1972: 126).

Thus, China seems to have created a remarkably efficient and humane system of child care, which is consistent with other societal institutions, in a remarkably brief period of time. It must be remembered, though, that these conclusions are all based upon unsystematic observations, during relatively short visits, to settings chosen by the Chinese hosts. A deeper understanding of the new Chinese system of caretaking, including the extent to which it is continuous and discontinuous with traditional methods of child rearing, as well as the extent of balance between supply and demand, must await the gathering of more extensive data, with more rigorous research techniques, than the current state of visitors' accounts contain.

4. The costliness of children. Raising children has always been hard work, a fact that often seems to be overlooked in contemporary advice to parents. What is different now is that the costs have gone up steeply relative to the rewards, and that parents and potential parents have more, and often more attractive options for investment of their time and energies. Some elaboration of these two points:

First, children in America are a big expense. In the early years of this country each additional child born into a family represented an

additional hand with the harvest or additional insurance of future support for a parent. By contrast, a child is now a large cost both to his parents and to the community. A recent study which translated this trend into dollars and cents estimated that the cost of raising one child in the U.S. to age 18 is $34,464. This figure goes up to $98,361 if one adds a college education and an estimate of the wages the mother "lost" by taking care of a child instead of holding a paying job. The study concludes: "Having a child will not only mean giving up one life style for another, but also potentially giving up one standard of living for another" (Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, 1971).

Second, caring for young children illustrates what I call the Persian Rug theory, which says that when people have more attractive and easier ways to spend their time, they tend to choose these alternatives. Crafts like rug-making, which require years of training and back-breaking labor, and which pay exploitatively low wages to the actual craftsmen, are dying out as jobs offering both higher wages and less exacting work have become more available. The care of young children is, likewise, an extremely time-consuming and difficult job, and in no society that I know of has it ever paid well, in money or esteem. As in the case of rug-making, when people have the opportunity to do something else, they often take it (as in the case of women doing the blandest kind of office work for pay that is just a little more than they need to pay someone else to look after their children).

Some Final Comments

This paper has been only a partial analysis of the structure of the child care system. A number of aspects (for example, the role of government and of private industry, both of which assume greater importance in the lives of children as child care becomes more formalized and commercialized) have been treated only peripherally. One can conclude even from this limited analysis, however, that there are ambiguities and discontinuities in the system of child care in this country. There is a great deal of ambivalence about the position of children in our society and, at the same time, about any kind of child care arrangements outside the home except for very poor children. The preference for individualized home care is stronger than in the other countries I studied, and this preference can be noted even in the patterns of services provided by public and voluntary agencies for neglected, dependent, emotionally disturbed, and other "problem" children. By contrast, Israeli programs for children "in distress" tend to concentrate on institutional care, "primarily because of the availability of this type of facility as compared with others, and because of the historical respectability associated with group education and ideology-oriented group life" (e.g., the Youth Aliya camps and peer groups within kibbutzim. Jaffe, 1970: 345). China seems to have made a clear decision in favor of group care-taking, even for long periods of time.

Finally, by comparison with other societies -- Sweden and China in particular -- the United States is experiencing discontinuities between our values and our behavior with respect to children. Several logical possibilities exist concerning the relationship between values and behavior: (a) that we actually value children less than we used to, and therefore our

neglect of them is consistent; (b) that we value children as much as ever (though perhaps for different reasons) but that our institutional arrangements do not allow us to care for them in a way consistent with our values; and (c) that we value children but we now value other things more (especially self-development), and this interferes with our behaving responsibly toward children. Which if any of these models most closely fits the American situation is unknown with currently available data, but it does seem clear that there is a substantial gap between the needs of children and the ability and/or willingness of the system to provide these needs.

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